



Connecticut State Dental Association

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Legislative Testimony SB-1 AAC Increasing Access to Affordable Quality Health Care Ms. Carol J. Dingeldey, Executive Director Connecticut State Dental Association

Good afternoon, Senator Handley, Representative Sayers, and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Carol Dingeldey, Executive Director of the Connecticut State Dental Association, known also as the CSDA. I thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Connecticut State Dental Association in support of Senate Bill 1.

First, I would like to applaud Senator Williams and his effort to begin a much needed dialog regarding a system of universal, quality health care for the people of Connecticut. The Connecticut State Dental Association appreciates the Senator's recognition of what so many studies confirm: that oral health is integral to overall health. SB-1 is the first universal health care program that includes the provision for dental care, and a much needed increase in the Medicaid reimbursement rate for dental services.

The CSDA would like to offer a point of clarification regarding the dental reimbursement rates called for in SB-1. While SB-1 calls for an increase in dental reimbursement rates to **70% of usual, customary and reasonable (UCR) fees**, what is really needed is an increase to the **70th percentile of acceptable dental fees**. While the difference between the two may seem to be a matter of semantics, it is in fact, quite dramatic.

In mathematical terms, UCR for a particular procedure, such as a dental cleaning, generally refers to the 50th percentile, meaning 50% of dentists' fees are higher than that number, and 50% of the fees are lower. That said, 70% of the UCR (or, 70% of the 50th percentile) roughly equates to the 35th percentile. The 70th percentile, on the other hand, refers to 30% of dentist fees being higher than that number, and 70% being equal to, or lower. As you have heard from others today, the current HUSKY reimbursement rates do not cover the cost to the dentist of providing the services. Increasing rates to the 70th percentile will allow the majority of dentists to cover their cost of providing services to this vulnerable population.

During the 2006 legislative session, House Bill 5790 introduced by Representative Sayers called for an increase in the HUSKY dental reimbursement rates to the 70th percentile level in an effort to increase access to dental care for HUSKY children. Using Representative Sayers' bill as a model, the CSDA asked its member dentists to make a pledge to participate in the HUSKY program. I am very happy to report that more than 350 CSDA member dentists pledged their participation – 290 of whom currently do not participate in HUSKY – if and when the reimbursement rates are increased to the 70th percentile. This is nearly triple the number of providers currently participating in HUSKY.

Again, the CSDA appreciates the inclusion of dental care in the universal health care program outlined in SB-1. Health care coverage, however, is meaningless without access to care. By increasing the dental reimbursement rates to the 70th percentile, access to dental care will be greatly enhanced. Please help the dentists in Connecticut help the citizens of Connecticut. On behalf of the CSDA and its 2,500 member dentists in the state of Connecticut, I thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this afternoon.